

Kids may get shortchanged in medal giveaway

By Roger Boye

Tens of thousands of children—including some in Illinois—will receive a free medalion next month commemorating Martin Luther King day on Jan. 20, 1986, the first federal holiday honoring a black American.

But the organization coordinating the giveaway likely will fail to meet its initial goal of distributing a medalion to 49 million U.S. school children [in kindergarten through 12th grade].

"We still don't have enough sponsors to cover all the requests [for medallions]," said Leonard Arzt, who is working on the project authorized by the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Inc. As of early December, the center had received letters asking for at least 3½ million medallions.

The center and the Alberta Mint—a Canadian company that will produce the medals—are continuing to solicit donations. Each \$1 given by a company or civic organization pays for one nickel-plated medal and literature describing King's life; about 15 percent of the contributed money goes to the King center.

In Illinois, a council formed by Gov. James Thompson is informing school officials of the medallion program. Public or private schools—or would-be donors—wanting more information should write to the King center at 450 Fifth St., N.W., 10th floor, Washington, D.C. 20001. The phone number is 202-626-1230 [ask for Arzt or Yoram Tanay].

Donors can designate that their money be used to buy medals for children attending a certain class, school or district.

● In yet another Statue of Liberty fund-raising project, a Philadelphia company is selling medallions that include bits of copper taken from the statue during its current restoration.

Each keepsake depicts a close-up of Liberty's upraised arm, with the torch's flame covered by authentic copper from the statue, polished to its original luster. At least 15 percent of the money from each medal sale will help pay for repairs to the statue and to immigration facilities on Ellis Island.

Costs per specimen are \$41 for silver-plated, \$57.50 for one-ounce silver, and \$1,000 for 1.1-ounce platinum [prices include postage and handling].

To order, write to the Liberty Commemorative Project, Ten Penn Center, Suite 1000, Philadelphia, Pa. 19103.